

THE CHURCH

In general

The Church is the living and real body of Christ; its head is Christ Himself. It is the community of the faithful. It consists of the publicans and the saints; the Pharisees and the martyrs; the prostitutes and the pious; the faithful and the irreverent. We are all members of the Church of Christ, not because we contribute to it financially, but because through our Baptism we are registered in the books of the Heavens.

The Apostle Paul is the first one who likened the Church to the human body which has parts. Within the Church, there exists a multitude of persons who become a body while each maintaining his/her own individuality. Just like the blood runs in every body and joins its parts, the Holy Spirit links the members of the Church with a link of love. **The Holy Spirit is the blood of the Church.** It gives Her life, and guides Her.

The Church is not a religious society that serves various needs and offers religious services to retain its clientele. It is not an organization that lives with exhibition and tyolatry. The Church is a communion and living relation between persons. It is at the same time a community of sinners and confused people who need therapy and mercy to be found within it.

The Church exists to reveal the truth of God. That is, when the people after the end of the world and history, become the Kingdom of God and live the completeness of love. The Church exists to reveal what is to come.

A miniature of the Church is the Parish – Community. Each parish is a tiny cell of the Church. It is the body of Christ. It is the local Church, centered at the temple. The temple is the space where the union of the heavens and the earth is revealed. *"While standing in the temple of your glory, we believe that we stand in the heavens"*. *The Parish acquires its entity around the Holy Eucharist, which is the revelation of the end to the present.* According to the Professor at the Theological School of Athens Fr. Metallinos, the relationship of many people with their Parish as well as the structure of the parish itself is a relationship based on religious principles. Christianity is seen by many people as a religion and the Holy Sacraments as "magical acts". In other words, when the Church does not act as a **living body**, then the faithful are religious out of necessity or

fear and not because they believe. In addition, if today's Church – the Parish offers services, it is due to the bureaucratic structure and needs of the contemporary society.

The clergyman is the deacon and "servant" of the Church – Parish. The clergyman is no one's clerk. He is not the bearer of worldly authority but of diaconate. True clergymen do not "reign"; they serve. They do not apply policy or practice politics; they guide the faithful. Christ did not come to reign, but to serve, and that makes up the essence of the priesthood. **The really pious clergyman is the one who does not hide Christ from the people by projecting his own "piety and spirituality".**

The honor and the "glory" of our priesthood should not be attributed to the plethora of our activities and achievements or to our intelligence, but to richness of the Grace of Christ, which is so generously given to us. A priest does not do his own work; he does not defend his own achievements. Everything is a gift from God. God's economy grants and blesses our service. *Therefore, the priesthood does not consist of human achievements which will be recorded in the books of history; it consists of divine acts in the Book of the Heavens.*

Our spiritual **exercise and self-criticism** must be frequent, so that we can see the real will of God. The clergyman must exist in a state of continuous spiritual readiness, so that he can protect himself from the temptations of **narcissism and self-adoration**. These temptations become stronger when the clergyman thinks he has some special charisma.

We, thus, have a long way to go in God's road. This road is "***a daily cross, because no one ascended into Heavens easily***" according to St. Isaac the Syrian.

My beloved,

The Church in our days is well developed in terms of buildings, but it is spiritually weak. We have quite a few temples which are architectural marvels. **However, do we have Christians who are resurrected miracles? Do we have Christians not simply of the Temple, but of Christ Himself?**

Life springs from the seed; not from branches and leaves. Christianity is the seed of strength and wisdom. It is the knowledge, love, humanity and diaconate "for the life of the world".

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